

APPROVED Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary – July 15, 2009
Mid-County Regional Services – 2424 Reddie Drive Wheaton, MD 20902

Members Present: Mara Baer; Gregory J. Baker; Karen Cordry; Jim Core; Eleanor Duckett; Kathleen Hurlid; Chris Lindsay; Diane Lynne; Erin Roberts; Morey Rothberg; Robert Schilke, and Fran Ware

Members Absent: Elizabeth Barksdale Boyle; Maureen Carrington; Rahman Harrison Manuel Hidalgo; Zoe Lefkowitz; Leonard Lucas; Ian Morrison; and Dave Taghipour

Staff Present: Gary Stith, Rob Klein and Natalie Cantor

Guests: Sonya Healy, Jonathan Fink, Corbin Sanft, and Virginia Sheard

Meeting Called to Order by Chairwoman Karen Cordry at 7:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes – A motion was made by Ms. Duckett to approve the June minutes and seconded by Mr. Lindsay. June minutes were approved. All were in favor.

Planning for the Elected Official meeting – Erin Roberts

Ms. Roberts stated the chief goals of the upcoming meeting with the Elected Officials are:

- to gain their support for redevelopment, and establish on-going communication with their staff;
- ask their support for the timely completion of the Wheaton Sector Plan;
- to get their support for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with WMATA and the Master Developer;
- ask for assistance in funding the Wheaton Redevelopment efforts;
- aim to make Wheaton a poster child for the whole Transit Oriented Development Legislation;
- secure funding streams with short-term goals, the committee would be in a better position to find an anchor for the region;
- it's an opportunity to open the eyes of the elected officials to the potential of Wheaton;
- assure elected officials they have the committee's support;
- put elected officials in contact with agencies like HUD and GSA to get their local officials to the meeting;
- to manage the meeting properly, a professional staff person needs to organize this meeting so as to foster a lasting relationship between the committee and the officials; and
- there was continued discussion over who to invite to the various meeting(s).

Mr. Stith expressed two goals for the meeting:

- educate officials about Wheaton and what the committee sees as its future; and
- communicate how these goals can be achieved.

Ms. Roberts discussed the invitee list, which included the County Executive, At-Large Councilmembers, State Senators and Delegates, Congressmen, and the chairs of WUDAC and MCCAB. Mr. Stith said a meeting with so many people may not be as effective as separate meetings; one focusing on getting the support of County officials, another on State, and another on Federal.

Discussion for one unified meeting persisted. Ms. Roberts proposed sending out a briefing packet to officials before the meeting(s). This would ensure that time would not be wasted bringing people up to date and hopefully allow for more conversation at the meeting

There was interest among some members, to hold separate meetings in hopes of avoiding a large public event that would accomplish little. Ms. Lynne proposed a more intimate gathering with the main goal being to educate officials.

Chairwoman Cordry proposed a preliminary meeting with the County officials in September and then a later meeting with State and Federal officials. Ms. Cordry asked Ms. Roberts to head a work group with assistance from Ms. Duckett to create an agenda and assemble a packet that will be sent out prior to meeting with elected officials.

Wheaton Redevelopment Report and Capital Budget – Mr. Stith

Ms. Cordry recognized Ms. Hurd and Mr. Core for their time served on the committee, as this will be their last meeting. Mr. Stith presented Ms. Cordry with a plaque in appreciation for her dedicated service as Chair of the Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee.

Mr. Stith introduced the positive aspects of the project, including being designated a “smart site” by the state government. The reason, he said, that Wheaton got the designation was due in large part to the governor’s emphasis on transit-oriented development and the potential in Wheaton, as it lies at the intersection of three major thoroughfares and contains a Metro Station. The County has worked closely with WMATA. He encouraged fostering relationships with other agencies in order to possibly gain unforeseen benefits similar to the designation of Wheaton as a “smart site”.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was approved by the WMATA Board of Directors, signed by the County, and is being sent to WMATA headquarters to be signed. The County is working with WMATA on a Request for Qualification from developers, while meetings with developers are also taking place. He emphasized “picking a partner and not a project” in reference to the emphasis on choosing the right developer. He wants transparency in the process of picking a developer, but also admitted a need to be careful to appropriately deal with more than one developer throughout the process. Mr. Stith stressed the importance of finding one main developer for the WMATA site, but also mentioned the desire for small developers being able to develop several County-owned parking lots in the area.

Mr. Stith provided an update on the on-going construction of the new Wheaton Pedestrian Walkway on Georgia Avenue and of the Fern Street Streetscape Project.

Sector Plan Update – Mr. Klein

Mr. Klein recapped the Sector Plan meeting that took place Monday, July 13, 2009, with special guest Sandra Tallant from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Ms. Tallant’s presentation included her vision for possible developments from certain pockets of Wheaton, as well as the area as a whole. Ms. Tallant met with Westfield on Tuesday, July 14, 2009. At this meeting, Westfield expressed their intention to stay in Wheaton for the long haul and said they are open to ideas. The two residential developments adjacent to Westfield were discussed, including community opposition to one of the sites that would increase the density on the road from 4 to 27 houses.

Mr. Klein discussed Ms. Tallant's desire to have a Sector Plan public meeting in September where she would present more materials. Following that public meeting, she would meet with the Planning Board to discuss draft recommendations. Ms. Hurd expressed her concern for the Sector Plan relying too heavily on the results from the traffic and transportation study instead of looking for an ultimate goal before the study was complete. She encouraged the group to look at how they want the Sector Plan to be developed independent of the study.

Ms. Duckett explained that the transportation report would not only include the parameters of transport in Wheaton, but also a vision of what could possibly be present in 30 years time. She concluded it was important to wait for the study to be done so as to include the County's vision of the project.

Mr. Klein said the Economic Development Committee has had relatively poor business participation, despite going door-to-door with invitations. There will be no Economic Development Subcommittee meeting until September.

Ms. Lynne told the committee of her recent trip to the opening of the W Hotel in downtown Washington. She spoke to some executives who expressed interest in developing a site in Wheaton for their budget-brand hotel chain Aloft. Though she spoke to nobody from Aloft, she passed along their contact information to Mr. Stith.

Safeway is still in discussions with Avalon Bay. However, Safeway is not committed to Avalon Bay and has been considering redeveloping their site to include a new store in addition to a high-rise residential building. The County advocated that Avalon Bay look at other grocery stores to prepare for the possibility that Safeway may not move.

MOTION to adjourn by Ms. Cordry, seconded by Ms. Duckett. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Note: The entire proceedings of the meeting are available on digital recording through the Wheaton Redevelopment Program— 240-777-8121.